

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 DRC-01 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 PM-05
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O R 040952Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7431
INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM
CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER
COMSIXTHFLT
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
DIA WASHDC
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 1855

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (MRN SHD READ 1855 VICE 81855)

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, MILI, ASEC, LE
SUBJ: LEBANESE SITUATION, APRIL 4, 1978, 1200 LOCAL

REF: BEIRUT 1831 (DTG 031108Z APR 78)

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. SITUATION REMAINED RELATIVELY STABLE IN
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SOUTH LEBANON, AS PALESTINIANS, ISRAELIS AND U.N. FORCES WERE
REPORTED DIGGING IN. FALASTIN AL THAWRA INDICATED THA PLO
WOULD NOT ALLOW THE PRESENCE OF U.N. TROOPS TO STOP THE FEDAYEEN
FROM ATTACKS AGAINST ISRAEL. SALAH KHALAF ENDORSED SHTAWRAH
AGREEMENT FOR SOUTH LEBANON. PIERRE GEMAYEL AND CAMILLE CHAMOUN
ENDORSED KAMAL ASSAD'S CALL TO MAKE UNIFIL INTO A DETERRENT
VTRIKE FORCE. THE ISRAELIS HAVE FREED A LEBANESE NEWSMAN

MISSING SINCE SEPTEMBER 1977. END SUMMARY.

2. MILITARY SITUATION.

A. ONLY SPORADIC SHOOTING WAS REPORTED FROM SOUTH LEBANON AS THE SITUATION REMAINED RELATIVELY STABLE. Wafa on April 3 again carried no accounts of military activity in the south.

B. ALL BEIRUT NEWSPAPERS REPORTED STATEMENT BY ISRAELI MILITARY COMMAND THAT: "ABOUT A WEEK AGO THE ISRAELI DEFENSE FORCES BEGAN A SIGNIFICANT THINNING OUT OF FORCES IN SOUTH LEBANON." MOST NEWSPAPERS, HOWEVER, EXPRESSED SKEPTICISM AND NOTED THAT PALESTINIANS, ISRAELIS AND U.N. FORCES WERE ALL DIGGING IN FOR WHAT LOOKED LIKE A LONG STAY. A PLO SPOKESMAN SAID, "EVERYONE IS ENTRENCHING. PALESTINIANS, ISRAELIS AND U.N. FORCES ALIKE ARE TAKING NO CHANCES."

C. A SMALL CONTINGENT OF NORWEGIAN SOLDIERS TOOK UP POSITION NEAR THE Khardali Bridge on April 2.

3. FALASTIN AL THAWRA ON THE SOUTH.

A. FALASTIN AL THAWRA, THE OFFICIAL PLO NEWSPAPER, MADE CLEAR ON APRIL 3 THAT THE PLO WOULD CONTINUE TO EMPHASIZE MILITARY ACTIVITIES AND WOULD NOT ALLOW THE PRESENCE OF U.N. TROOPS TO PREVENT THE USE OF LEBANON AS A BASE FOR ATTACKS AGAINST

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ISRAELIS. THE PAPER STRESSED THAT "FIGHTING THE ZIONIST ENEMY IS THE ONLY WAY TO LIBERATE THE OCCUPIED LAND." FALASTIN AL THAWRA ALSO NOTED "THAT THE PALESTINIAN REVOLUTION ASSERTS THAT IT WILL NOT TOLERATE ANY RESTRAINTS ON EITHER ITS POLICIES OR ITS ACTIVITIES."

B. THE PAPER WENT ON TO SAY THAT: "THE PALESTINIAN REVOLUTION JOINS THE LEBANESE NATIONAL MOVEMENT IN ITS CALL TO RESIST THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION WHICH WAS SPAWNED BY ARAB WEAKNESS, . . . FOR THOSE SELF-DECEIVERS WHO GAMBLE ON THE U.N. FORCES ARE ACCEPTING THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE OCCUPATION AND THE CREATION OF AN ISOLATIONIST CANTON, A BRIDGEHEAD FOR ISRAEL IN LEBANON."

4. SALAH KHALAF ENDORSES SHTAWRAH AGREEMENT.

IN AN INTERVIEW PUBLISHED BY AN NAHAR ON APRIL 1, FATAH CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBER SALAH KHALAF SAID THAT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SHTAWRAH AGREEMENT IN SOUTH LEBANON WAS THE BEST WAY TO AVOID DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE AND LEBANESE AUTHORITIES. (COMMENT: THE PALESTINIANS FEAR THAT THE GOL WILL USE UNSC RESOLUTION 425 AS A PRETEXT FOR ABROGATING WHAT THEY SEE

AS THEIR RIGHT TO BE IN SOUTH LEBANON UNDER THE CAIRO ACCORDS AND SHTAWRAH AGREEMENT. END COMMENT.)

5. CHRISTIAN LEADERS SUPPORT STRONGER U.N. FORCE.

A. CAMILLE CHAMOUN ON APRIL 3 VOICED SUPPORT FOR CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES PRESIDENT KAMAL AL ASSAD'S CABLE (SEPTTEL) TO SECRETARY-GENERAL WALDHEIM, CALLING FOR THE CONVERSION OF UNIFIL INTO A DETERRENT STRIKE FORCE. CHAMOUN, COMMENTING ON REPORTS THAT THE FRENCH WERE READY TO INCREASE THEIR PARTICIPATION IN UNIFIL, ADDED THAT: "I HEAR THEY WANT TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF FRENCH TROOPS TO 2500. IN MY OPINION, 5,000 WOULD BE BETTER."

B. PIERRE GEMAYEL IN HIS DAILY PRESS STATEMENT ON APRIL 3 ALSO
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PRAISED ASSAD'S CABLE. ACCORDING TO PHALANGIST LEBANESE NEWS AGENCY, GEMAYEL THE SAME DAY HAD HELD A "FIRST OF A KIND" MEETING WITH MUSLIM LEADERS. (COMMENT: IN FACT THE MEETING WAS WITH SECOND LEVEL MUSLIM FIGURES, SUCH AS LAWYER ABDEL HAMID AHDAB, WHO HAVE LONG BEEN ON FRIENDLY TERMS WITH MARONITES. END COMMENT.) ACCORDING TO THE NEWS AGENCY, GEMAYEL TOLD THE MEETING THAT THE PHALANGE OPPOSED THE PRESENCE OF ARMED PALESTINIANS HERE, BUT NOT THAT OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE WHO WERE "FORCED TO COME TO LEBANON."

6. NEWSMAN FREED.

ISRAEL HAS FREED AHMED ZEIN, ONE OF THREE LEBANESE NEWSMEN MISSING IN SOUTH LEBANON SINCE SEPTEMBER 22, 1977. ZEIN AND TWO COLLEAGUES--PHOTOGRAPHER ISHER MILHEM AND REPORTER FAREK MADI--HAD DISAPPEARED IN KFAR-SHUBA WHILE ON ASSIGNMENT FOR THE LEFTIST BEIRUT DAILY AL KIFAH AL ARABI. ZEIN SAID THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS HAD ARRANGED HIS RELEASE AND THAT HIS TWO COLLEAGUES WOULD BE FREED IN "NOT MORE THAN TEN DAYS."
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